

The Coming Day.

MAY, 1899.

OUR CASE.

SPOKEN AT CROYDON.

IT is not a good thing for any body of religious people, and it is specially not a good thing for us, to be always bringing to the front the differences that divide from other Christian churches, but, at fitting times, it is a good thing, a right thing, and a necessary thing, to explain why we stand apart, and why, in the midst of so many Churches, we cannot consent to merge our life in theirs.

It seems to me that this Church is specially bound, on fitting occasions, to give a reason for its separate existence. Other Churches may exist because they are established by authority, because they are powerful, or popular, or orthodox; or they may exist as a matter of course; and those who find a home in them may have had no more to do with their establishment than they have had to do with the fixing of the locality of London. Other Churches may exist as creatures of circumstances, or, as the great State Church does, as a part of the inherited national furniture, as (what we rightly call it) an Establishment. But this Church exists under entirely different conditions. We must explain why we stand on one side, why we stand alone, why we submit to all kinds of religious, ecclesiastical and social disqualifications, and why we plainly or by implication set ourselves against the commonly held opinions of our neighbours.

All these matters want explaining, all these questions want answering. And we may be sure that if we cannot answer them we are in a false position, as those who needlessly multiply divisions and foolishly suffer what they might be spared. We may be still more sure of this, that if any of us

are not quite clear about these things, if we have no definite ideas concerning the necessity and the reasons for our separate existence, there will be, in such cases, little likelihood of any real, hearty, staunch and intelligent abiding-by, either our principles or our Church.

In attempting, then, to answer the questions I have suggested (or rather, in pointing out the direction in which each one of us may find answers for himself), it will be obvious that I can only cover a little of the ground opened by this inquiry; but, if we can contrive now to get a clear view of even a little of that ground, something will be gained.

What have we to offer to the world? A full reply would be as many-sided as life itself; for our idea of the Church relates to all life. We contemplate social results, moral results, intellectual results, and religious results. Man himself is a many-sided being. He has an intellectual personality, he is a moral being, he has religious sympathies, he is a social being. He thinks, discriminates, plans, and acts (in a state of real freedom), as his own master, he has emotions that give him a distaste for certain actions and a sense of approval of others; he is filled with awe before the tremendous realities of the infinite, he is linked by a thousand ties, with his kind. Our Church has a recognition for all these sides or aspects of human life, and, with this recognition, it offers help, food and light.

We meet him as a being endowed with reason, and we do no violence to the intellectual personality that is at the very root of manhood and womanhood. We recognise that personality, we do not seek to limit it, nor to hinder it; we do not attempt to impose upon it intellectual fetters forged by other minds. We glory in it; we seek to develop it; we encourage the free, healthy, cheerful and vigorous use of all its power; we offer it help but not authority; we pity it when it is stunted, and emasculated, and led captive either by antiquity, or custom, or a multitude; we offer it a home where it can develop its powers without fear of hindrance, reproach or disqualification.

We meet him also as a moral being. We

recognise the instincts of his nature that lead him to form moral judgments and draw moral distinctions, as a most precious part of his being. We therefore think that any discouragement of these moral instincts, any repression of them, any attempt to over-ride them, (even at the bidding of a so-called revelation) can only be injurious and must ever be unwise or even criminal.

We meet him, again, as a religious being. We recognise those tendencies of his nature which ever lead him to seek for the great Being from whom he came and upon whom he depends. We encourage the feelings, the yearnings, the profound emotions of awe, of reverence, of hope and fear, that have played so wonderful a part in the history of mankind. We ask for no stifling of these emotions, but, on the contrary, urge him to trust them as adequate for his guidance to God. We appeal to these amazing instincts; for they furnish us with all we need in the attempt to discover the complete and perfect will of God.

We meet man, finally, as a social being. We recognise the sympathies that ally him to his kind: we therefore do not recognise the social and sectarian restrictions and exclusions that are thoroughly out of harmony with them. We are one: we are one in our relation to God; we are one in our relation to each other. It is this great social truth which, in religion, is giving the death-blow to Calvinism, with its exclusive doctrines of election and reprobation: it is this that, in Church-life, is giving the death-blow to the sectarianism that can only thrive where the social spirit is foregone.

Here, then, are these four facts which, in all their fulness and with all their natural and logical consequences, we desire to recognise and act upon,—that man has an intellectual personality, and has therefore a right to the unquestioned possession of his faculties, and to their vigorous and unhindered use; that he is a moral being, and is and must be the judge of what is just and unjust, right and wrong; that he is a religious being, and has, in his own breast, the revelation from the God that made him; and that he is a social being who, with the full and healthy development of his

social instincts, cannot approve of theological or ecclesiastical limitations and exclusions.

And now, in applying these four facts, look with me at certain peculiarities of our Church, and then judge whether we really do meet the many-sided being I have described.

And first,—notice that we recognise, as the only object of worship,—one God, without mediators. Apart from the one great primary and inevitable difficulty as to the being, the personality, and the omnipresence of God, we have no intellectual difficulties with regard to the object of worship. We worship one God. God our Father is our only God. The Holy Spirit is simply our Father's Holy Spirit,—Himself. Jesus Christ, is God's true son; not our mediator, but our guide to God. Jesus Christ does not stand between us and God: he only shews us the way to God: he tells us why we should seek Him: he shews us how to serve Him. This is, then, the first leading specialty of our Church,—that we have no intellectual, moral or religious confusions in our worship, that we look to God and to God alone as the object of worship, and that we come to Him as His children and for ourselves.

A second specialty opens up that vast field into which I can only ask you to look in passing. I refer to the absolute rationality and religiousness of our faith. From the cradle to the grave, and from the grave to the great realities of the eternal world, our faith sheds light. The little child is not, in our opinion, born in sin, an heir to perdition, a child of wrath. The grown man is not an enemy of God, unable to extricate himself from his misery and sin, whom only a miracle of saving grace can pluck from the jaws of Hell. God is not a respecter of persons, a partial dispenser of His favours, a merciless tyrant and relentless judge. These, and such as these, are the thoughts that mould and determine our faith, explain the mysteries of life, cheer us amid the burdens and difficulties of our way, and give us light in the valley of the shadow.

We maintain, then, that our heresy is only the heresy of enlightened reason and active reverence. We are not rebels revolting against God,

we are anxious children trying to win our way to His feet. Hence our reverence for God and for the faculties He has given us lies at the very heart of our faith. It ought to be written on the gates of the Church in letters of gold—that no man is called upon by God, and that no man should be called upon by his fellow-man to believe what seems to him to be intellectually false or morally unsound. We must hold to that; for it is amongst the first principles of all right reason and good conduct, that real belief must be founded on knowledge, and that a man's faith must commend itself to his moral sense. The wonderful thing is that every one does not see this, and gladly acknowledge and act up to it. Nothing hinders men here but forgone conclusions and accepted creeds which bar the way: so they stop thinking, and take shelter under the plea of mystery.

This is what we object to. We say—if you tell us that we must not be led by reason in religious matters, and that we must not judge of what is wrong or right in God by our moral sense; if you ask us to call that just and right in God what would be cruel and wrong in man, you ask us to confound all intellectual distinctions, and blot out all moral standards, and you virtually prepare the way for the night wherein all hideous superstitions may creep forth to plague and confound the sightless, powerless soul. There is no escape from this conclusion, if you once forbid reason and the moral sense to be, for each man, the test of the true and the good.

Now, apply these fundamental principles to particular instances. We refuse to believe in the Trinity. Why? Because we rebel against what is revealed? No, on the contrary, because it is not revealed, for that cannot be revealed which is positively without meaning, as this dogma is, involving a confusion of ideas, and conducting to nothing that can be a proper object of human thought. No one can say what the doctrine really is. It is defended as part of an antiquated system, but it cannot be even described as an object of thought or faith. Our objection to it is not that it is false, but that it is simply meaningless, conveying no idea to the mind, and being,

therefore, as good as nothing, even to those who use the phrases of the creed.

I will now give an instance of the other kind. We refuse to believe in the Atonement as commonly taught. Why? Here our objection is, not that the dogma is unmeaning—no object of thought—but that it is immoral. Our very reverence for God, our love, our trust, our confidence in Him, forbid us to believe that it was God who hung upon the cross, that God in heaven accepted the pains and blood of God on earth as the price of His pardon. This is what we are taught by the advocates of what is called the orthodox faith, and this is what our veneration for God forbids us to believe. Our moral sense guides us here, and we absolutely refuse to believe that which degrades God in our eyes, by ascribing to Him deeds and plans which would simply be grossly cruel and unjust in man.

For the same reasons we refuse to believe in the dogma of everlasting punishment. We hold that God is a perfect God—that He is everywhere, and that He is everywhere with all his perfections. If, then, God is everywhere, He is in hell; and if He is everywhere with all His perfections, He is near to the most miserable spirit there, as the God of perfect righteousness, goodness, justice and truth. But we are told hell is a hideous place where God is not, and where all who miss heaven will be for ever tortured in one long, purposeless, useless, objectless because endless agony:—no justice, no pity, no God, no hope for ever. This we disbelieve with all our hearts, simply because we believe in God's omnipresence, and in His justice, truth and mercy, as existing and displayed in every place. Our reason, our moral sense, and our best thoughts of God revolt, I say, against these bad dreams of the dark night of the past, and we feel bound to be true to the light that God has given us in our hearts and minds.

It is such a religious faith we offer to the world. Judge you how far it is reasonable.

A third specialty of our Church is our attitude towards science and towards all truth based upon and appealing to facts. Even in our own day, science and religion are pitted one

against the other, or, if not violently divorced, are, as violently and grotesquely reconciled. It is still common to ask for submission and not to offer a proof. It is still forbidden to go beyond the conclusions arrived at 200 or 1800 years ago. We know nothing of this. The cry against science has never disgraced our ministry and degraded our Church; and we have consistently based our conclusions upon ascertained facts. We have no authorities, no final documents with which we must somehow square our thoughts,—(or, at all events, our utterances): we are mentally and spiritually free; and I believe there is no Church that would more speedily or more cheerfully and naturally revise its conclusions, upon the accession of more light. The reason for this is plain. We are free to choose and we are in the pursuit of truth. We ask for light, we ask for proofs, we ask for facts; and we are absolutely free to go wherever God and the growing day shall lead us. Again I presume that no one will deny that this also is one of the specialties of our Church.

This is a matter of great practical moment, especially at a time like this when scientific knowledge is making such terrific havoc with the old beliefs. The great problem of the age is whether religion will at all survive these shocks; and survive them it will not if the defenders of religion called orthodox have it their own way; for these stake everything upon the infallibility of a book, or the correctness of a record which stands in constant danger of being completely upset by modern knowledge. The Church, therefore, which is urgently needed is one that shall know how to base religion upon permanent things, and be ready to welcome every revelation of Nature as the truth of God.

A fourth specialty is our freedom from all inquisitions and exclusions in the matter of Church membership. Our Church knows nothing of any excluding or electing: and we have no officials to whom we give, or who exercise the right to make, inquisition into the conduct or the belief of a brother. Men and women join us of their own free-will, and because they are, in some way, in

sympathy with us, or desirous of being helped by us; (we need be under no apprehension about their coming from any other motive!) We do not make ourselves responsible for those who come: every one to his own conscience, every one to his own master, must stand or fall. This is why we call ours a 'Free' church,—a church where men and women may come and find room to think, room to wait, room to doubt, if they like,—though, God knows! we do our best to get rid of doubt. Such a Church,—that can dare trust itself to human nature, and that has flung off the last timid or despotic badge of mistrust or bondage,—is one of the great necessities of our time; and such a Church, I once more presume, no one will deny is ours.

A fifth and final specialty of our Church is the honest freedom of its ministry. I use the word 'honest' advisedly. There is freedom elsewhere, I know,—after a fashion:—freedom clutched at, freedom asked as a favour, freedom exercised in spite of confessions of Faith and title deeds, freedom covertly taken, freedom timidly enjoyed at intervals; but how can this freedom be perfectly honest while the verbal bonds and the creedal fetters remain? Take the Established Church of this country. It is notorious that it contains within its pale teachers of all shades of opinion—Methodist, Papist, Calvinistic, Unitarian; and yet all these are bound by the same hard and fast lines of the 39 Articles, and are sworn to teach a definite set of opinions. Is that a state of things to be desired? Is consistency nothing? One man manages to stay in, though he eats away the life of the Creed he vows before God he believes; and another is expelled who has not contrived to elude the vigilance of his guards: but what shall we say of those who come out and take the consequences? I say they are the pioneers of the new reformation, the builders of the strong, great, beautiful church of the future, who may indeed be misunderstood to-day, but whom future ages will know how to recognise and bless. To this band of progressive spirits we desire to belong, and we have no greater ambition than to go before and prepare the way of the Lord.

What may come to pass concerning us we know not ;—we may only share the Master's fate in being despised and rejected ; but, like him, we believe we shall live in those who come after us, we shall live in the sublime ideas and inspiring truths that lie at the heart of our faith, we shall live in that wide and generous Church of God which will one day take the place of the narrow Churches of man.

HIDING THE FACE FROM JESUS.

SPOKEN AT CROYDON, FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

We hid, as it were, our faces from him.—
Isaiah liii. 3.

TO-DAY, we will not dispute with those who say that the ancient Hebrew prophet intended Jesus Christ when he described 'the man of sorrows': but his words all down the centuries have fitted all the chosen ones of God, 'despised and rejected of men.'

If, however, we apply them to Jesus now, they seem antiquated beyond all imagination. At any rate, the vast majority of those who read them or who hear them read, would say: 'At all events, it would not have been so if I had been there: I, at least, would not have stood aside while this gentle head was bowed in sorrow and his disciples forsook him and fled: I at least would have walked by his side when his friends deserted him, and when the twelve watched him from some secret hiding place, as he passed on to die: I at least would have spoken a word of affection amid the torrent of abuse; I would have wiped the blood-stain from the forehead where the sharp thorn had wounded him, and looked up into his face and called him "Master and dear friend."'

Brothers and sisters! let us not be so sure of that. I think the very best of us might perhaps have sold him with Judas, or denied him with

Peter, or fled from him with them all : and I think if he came again, just as he did and as he was in Palestine, it would not be easy for him to find faith upon the earth,—even here. Of course, we cannot deny him as he was once denied ; for he is with us no more in the flesh. We cannot look into his loving eyes ; we cannot hear his pleading voice ; we cannot watch the wonders of his hand. And yet, from his kingship, his example, and his memory, we may too sadly turn away. For, mark this : Jesus, for us, stands as the representative of an idea, a cause, a principle, and a kind of life ; and we turn away from him—we hide our faces from him—when we turn away from his principles, and hide our faces from his aims and mode of life. He himself is beyond our honour or dishonour, but it is a great thought that we may find him in principles, and ideas, and duties ;—it is a sorrowful thought that we may lose him by neglecting them.

We may hide our faces from him, for instance, when we make more of our sect than of him. And this is done. How sensitive men often are as to their own little circle of thought !—how are they alarmed at every word that does not quite square with their settled creed !—how concerned for points of sectarian order and established rule !—crying out for freedom, and yet tying tighter and tighter their sectarian bonds ;—quarrelling over points of mere detail, wasting precious time over matters of form, and turning the milk of human kindness into bitterness, about the length of a fringe, the lighting of a candle, the adjustment or colour of a robe, the omission of a word, or, God forgive us, the way you eat the bit of bread which contains your Christ ! And where is Christ all the while ? Practically forgotten, so far as his spirit and example are concerned. And, all the while, the great sorrowful world he came to save is rushing on, bearing on its bosom the burden of its sins and sorrows ;—and yet if you dare to go an inch beyond the well-worn rut of routine to save men,—if you call to men's hearts in your own way and not in the Church's way, it will be well if you escape without heart-break.

The Christian world has come to such a pass that it is very doubtful whether Jesus Christ himself, if he were here, would not be the first to be cast out even from the Church that is called by his name. Christ came to save men not to set up churches. When a man is to be saved from drowning it does not matter how you fling the rope or who flings it: and when a child is to be saved from a burning house it does not matter how you pull it out or who does it. So is it in the work of saving the souls of men. An earnest man, therefore, who understands this, is a thousand fold more anxious to bless the world than to observe an order—to save a soul than to keep a rule:—such an one had better do nothing in the customary way, putting aside anything and everything to enable him to pluck men as brands from the burning, than be simply a creature of rule and custom, too timid to depart from the fashion, too shallow to make a path for himself, too professional to swerve from a regulation, and too weak to do anything but follow in the groove already marked out for him to tread in.

Only consider what it is we really have to do! Here is a poor prodigal world, weary and heavy-laden in the way of its transgressions: here are men pining for lack of knowledge, women forgetting their womanhood through ignorance, and children perishing, their very lips steeped in sin, before they know the taste or meaning of it: and I say it would be a sorrowful thing if any consideration held us back,—if like the prophets of old we did not strive and work, as in a great agony to save men's souls and bodies.

For, after all, what is the end of this activity in the world of religious thought and effort? Surely, surely, it can only be justified on the plea that all we do is needed, to lift up this heavy-laden world, lest it sink utterly; to turn wandering feet into the way of righteousness, and to make the prayer and hope of Christ come true. And surely, in so far as we come short of that great unselfish idea of Christian work and worship, and fight for ourselves and our Churches, we do hide, as it were, our faces from him.

But, again, we hide our face from Christ

when we turn away from the so-called 'common people' and the poor. We are apt to do this, even when we are unconscious of it, and when to be disloyal to Christ is farthest from our thoughts. And yet, if our thoughts and deeds were to be put into honest words, how often should we be found speaking treason against the son of man, who himself was despised and poor! We are too apt to let the measure of a man's wealth be the measure of the attention we pay to him. The world, as a rule, is too apt to put the miserable out of sight and to leave out of its reckoning the poor man because he is poor. And yet our master was himself poor, and was a minister to the poor,—was despised also and rejected of men—'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' I would to God I could see my own way more clearly in this matter; I only know that a perfectly Christly work is waiting for us, where Christ seems least to be. Can we do nothing for those who heard him gladly? Can we do nothing for the rough men and the poor women who never pass the doors of a church or chapel? We should perhaps have to overcome a great deal of personal feeling, and do things we would rather not do,—but we must make sure that we do not hide our faces from our great leader, in giving way to even natural shrinking from some associations. Surely the time is coming when these things will be better understood, and when he who does what Christ did will be deemed the truest follower of him. And what it was he did you all know. You know how he sat with sinners, and blest the poor; and how men insulted him for it. You know how a sinful woman washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and how, instead of driving her away, he bent down and spoke Heaven's forgiveness to her. You know how he sought out the neglected, the wretched, and the humble; for to such, he said, was he sent. 'They that are whole,' he said, 'need not a physician, but they that are sick.' When these things are borne in mind as they ought to be in the Church, then shall we see that not much speaking, and many prayers, and magic sacraments, and pretty rituals, are the life and soul of

the work of the Christian Church, but mercy and charity, and the pitiful humanity that lived in the soul of the despised and rejected Nazarene. And then we shall turn away no more, with fluttering haste, from 'the lower orders' and the poor, but we shall look upon them almost with reverence, for the sake of him who lived and died to bless them.

For though Heaven's gates have long since closed,
And our dear Lord in bliss reposed

High above mortal ken,
To every ear in every land,
(Though only meek hearts understand)
He speaks as he did then.

I in your care my brethren left,
Not willing ye should be bereft
Of waiting on your Lord.
The meanest offering ye can make,
A cup of water for love's sake,
In Heaven, be sure, is stored.

So, as we walk our earthy round,
Still may the echo of that sound
Be in our memory stored.
Christians! behold your happy state,
Christ is in those who round you wait,
Make much of your dear Lord.

'Inasmuch,' says Christ, 'as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.'

So, too, we may hide our face from him when we shrink from sorrow or trouble as wholly evil. We dare not say that grief is a good thing in itself, and a thing to be desired: we dare not say it is wrong to pray against it; for the human heart naturally rebels against it, and the good God made us as we are. But the natural shrinking of the human heart from sorrow may be seriously and unlawfully exaggerated. When a great sorrow comes to our homes—perhaps our first great sorrow,—when the light has been put out, or the strength has been snatched away, or the glory has departed,—how we rebel! how do heart and face turn away from the cruel heavens that seem turned to brass against our bitter prayers!—and we forget the man of sorrows; or, if we think of him, the shadow of his sorrow and not the glory of his patience gathers round us, and the very face of God is blotted from the Heavens.

And yet there is a sacredness in sorrow, did we but know it,—a deep blessing in grief, deep as the love of God, deep as the heart of Jesus. For it is better to be blessed than to be happy: and blessedness often comes more richly with the hand that wounds. As, when the storm bursts over the quiet village, striking terror into the hearts of all, it leaves behind it, when it has passed, a clearer sky, a fresher atmosphere, a sweeter fragrance, and a lovelier foliage,—so when some storm of sorrow bursts upon the quiet home, breaking up the little circle there, and smiting the heart with fear, then is blessing near, and then is it good to turn the face unto God, who will hold our hand till the storm is overpast, and who will, at all events, lead us into light through no darker way than that wherein Jesus walked.

I know, indeed, how hard this is—how hard it is to be silent before sorrow, and to look trouble in the face,—how hard it is to believe that the face which wears so dark a shroud can be the face of a friend. I know how hard it is that Lazarus should be laid in the grave and that Mary should break her heart at home; and I know how natural it is for us to shrink from grief and plead for a staying of the hand when the bereaving angel passes by the door: but I know, also, that if we were in full accord with the heart and mind of Jesus—if we knew all the meaning of his life—we should know who directs our way. For he has taught us how to sorrow and yet to walk with God. He taught us this on the hills of Galilee and in the streets of Jerusalem,—amid deriding crowds and on the shameful cross. It is a sacred teaching—the teaching of the divinest sorrower God ever blessed and grieved. Let us bow our hearts before Him and pray that it may not be hidden from our eyes.

There be many other ways of hiding the face from Jesus; but of these I cannot speak now. Hard indeed it is, I know, for men in these distracted times to keep the vision of that holy face of Jesus all clear and pure: for the dimming mists of time, and the dust of the streets, and the glamour of pleasure, and the clouds of passion only too surely hide him from our eyes. Alas for us if we, to

the sin of allowing these clouds to rise, add this far greater sin of turning our faces from even the little of this face that we might see! Let us be careful and walk with a gentler tread. Let us compel the world to give us more quiet; and, if we cannot snatch them from business, let us at least take them from the hours of pleasure, for the holy face is never seen but by the calm and quiet soul.

As we think of him to-day, let us think of him as he was when he lived in Nazareth or taught in Jerusalem. Let us think of him as the man Christ Jesus, our gentle brother, the champion of the poor. Let not the grandeur which an adoring Church has flung about him serve to hide his true face from our eyes: for we want a Christ of the olden times, the Christ of Galilee, of Judea and of Calvary. I would not erase one trouble-line from his face, nor rob him of one thorn from his crown. Ours be the Christ that poor women loved, that orphans clung to, that sinners blest, that the proud man scorned or the sinner cursed. Ours be the Christ who hungered, and slept the sleep of the weary,—who mourned, and was grieved, and wept,—whose visage was marred more than any man's,—who gave his back to the smiters and his hands and feet to the nails. For then, in his company, tears will be consecrated and sorrow will be sanctified, and we shall find in him what our hearts so sorely need—a refuge from the tempest and a haven from the storm. Then shall we wear our little crown of thorns as a garland of praise, and we shall have songs in the night, and the head of the angel of sorrow will be crowned with stars. Yes; and best of all, when we have looked a little upon his sorrowful face, we shall go hence to look upon his triumphant and glorious face; and after we have travelled with him awhile in these lower ways of time, we shall tread with him, unweariedly, the home where, to be free from sorrow is to be free from sin.

THE ALLEGED PROPHECIES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTA- MENT.

SIX LECTURES—REVISED.

LECTURE VI. (*Concluded.*)

A passage in Hosea xi. 1 is quoted in Matthew ii. 13-15 as fulfilled by Christ. The passage in Hosea reads—‘When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.’ The passage in Matthew reads:—

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

This is a case of direct assertion of prophecy; and a very bad case it is. We have already seen, by proofs that are overwhelming, that the people of Israel were constantly personified, and called the servant or son of God. It is so here. ‘When Israel was a child,’ that is—when the people of Israel were in the infancy of their national life, ‘I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt’; and so, according to the record, He did, bringing forth the children of Israel out of Egypt. That the nation is intended is plain from the next verse, where we read that this ‘child’ fell into idolatry, and ‘sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.’ Then it adds—‘He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refuse to return’ (or repent). What is this but an explicit limiting of the picture to the child of God, the people of Israel, called out of Egypt, then falling into idolatry, and then sent to captivity? And yet Matthew, violently cutting half-a-dozen words out of their connection, perverts them into a prophecy concerning Christ! I do not wonder that acute persons have been led to say that the story of Christ’s being taken into Egypt was itself invented to match the invented pro-

phesy. The case is made more palpably bad by the fact that the verse is not a prediction at all, but an historical statement. It told of something past, not of something to come—‘I called my son out of Egypt.’ But they who read the whole passage will see that the reference to the people Israel is clear. It must be noted, too, that ‘Ephraim’ is also spoken of, and in a similar manner (verse 3). Using the same beautiful and touching figure, and representing Jehovah as a Father dealing with children, the prophet says, speaking for God, ‘I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms.’

A similar passage, similarly treated, is to be found in Micah v. 2.

But thou, Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

In Matthew ii. 1-6 we read:—

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Here, the interpretation of the prophecy is attributed to ‘the chief priests and scribes,’ which, to say the least of it, is unlikely. In any case, test the passage in Matthew, by an original reading of the passage in Micah. Its application to Christ will then be a burst bubble. The ruler who is to come out of Bethlehem is definitely described (verse 5), as a man who shall deliver the Jews from the Assyrians, and waste the land of Nimrod; and the rest of the chapter is taken up with references to the cutting off of enemies, the destruction of chariots, the throwing down of strongholds, the abolishing of witchcraft, and the smashing of idols: all of which is utterly inapplicable to Christ, and yet it all occurs in the description of the ruler from

Bethlehem and the events of his expected reign. The reference to the Assyrians limits and localises the prediction, and makes it inapplicable to Christ, in whose days the Assyrians had ceased to be an independent people.

The last passage I shall refer to is in Malachi iii. 1, which is quoted in Matthew xi. 10, as a prophecy concerning Christ's 'messenger,' John the Baptist. It reads thus:—

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

This 'messenger' is, in Matthew xi. 10, distinctly said to be John the Baptist. But a reference to the passage in Malachi shews that this 'messenger' is to herald in a time altogether different from that occupied by the life of Christ. It is a time of terror that is foretold. The very next verse asks, 'But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?' 'The Lord' will come with swift judgment. That day will 'burn as an oven,' and the wicked will be like 'stubble,' in that 'great and dreadful day of the Lord:—all of which does not at all apply either to John the Baptist, to Christ, or to his times. But further; the burden of the chapter is neglected 'ordinances,' and unpaid 'tithes.' On account of these, God will judge the people; and, to remind them of these, His 'messenger' will come. The end will be accomplished in the purification of 'the sons of Levi' (verse 3), that they may attend to the 'offering' or ordinances of the temple 'as in the days of old,' and in the peace and prosperity of the nation, dwelling in its 'delightful land' (verse 11-12). Besides, this 'messenger' of the covenant is one in whom the Jews 'delight.' I need not dwell upon this, to point out the utter inappropriateness of all that to John, to Jesus, or to his times.

Thus, one by one, the broken reeds disappear:—and what then? What good will it do to tell these things? I answer;—Much good. It puts you in possession of the truth, and that is always good. It takes away a false buttress to the

pernicious dogmas of the infallibility of the Bible and the Deity of Jesus. It helps you to really understand the Old Testament, and that is a great gain : and finally, it teaches you to use your reason, to exercise your judgment, to cultivate your independence and freedom. If these do not appear to you to be good things, I can only express the hope that something may happen to you to compel you to think for yourselves,—to cease to be children and to begin your intellectual lives as self-reliant women and thoughtful men.

The Editor of 'The Coming Day' believes that the work done by the Lectures on The Alleged Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ in the Old Testament has not been done elsewhere. There are many books on the subject, but they are either conventional or didactic, too fragmentary or too full, over-learned or rhetorical. A comprehensive little work, at once brief and thorough, simple and radical, was wanted, and badly wanted ; and such a work he believes this is. The Six Lectures are now ready in neat cover, and will be sent to any part of the world for sixpence. Address:—Clydesdale, Altyre Road, Croydon.

CREATION MYTHS OF PRIMITIVE AMERICA.*

AN intensely curious book ; but we confess that we are not altogether surprised at the verdict of a certain scholar who put aside these myths with the remark, 'Mais, Monsieur, c'est quelque chose d'absurde.' A deeper scrutiny, however, changes that, only one sadly needs an interpreter. So, for once, we complain of the brevity of the Introduction and the paucity of the Notes, though these are very helpful, as far as they go.

The preliminary account of North American Indian mythology in relation to the origin of man, is, however, fairly full and eminently interesting. It runs something like this :—In the beginning there was a world different from this, and crowded with beings different from man as we know him. All these beings were in a condition of perfect peace, harmony and happiness, and so they continued for countless ages. Then they began to mentally and passionately move, and awful conflicts arose, with vast conflagrations and outpourings of

* 'Creation Myths of Primitive America, in relation to the Religious History and mental development of mankind.' By Jeremiah Curtin. London : Williams & Norgate.

blood. Then these beings—all but a few—were changed into all kinds of beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles and insects, as well as trees, grasses, rocks and the like, each one becoming outwardly what he was inwardly. The few who were left, sailed away westward to upper regions where they are to-day, and will for ever be.

The myths partly tell the story of the tremendous crash, and the passing of the old and the beginnings of the new world and order. They are extremely old. Mr. Curtin would carry them beyond any of the records of the world's Bibles. They were evolved in absolute isolation. 'Human history has no second example of a single system of thought developed over such a vast area.' These myths, or the system of thought and belief indicated by them, and the explanations of them given by the magic men (mediums, sorcerers, call them what we will) are, we are told, the sole rule of Indian conduct and procedure; Ethics, Polity, Religion, all here. But we think many explanations would be needed to extract much of practical value out of these terrific stories. One of them, 'Sedit and the two brothers Hus' is particularly sane, poetical and philosophical. The others are enormously picturesque, and quite as wild, bloody and improbable as anything Rider Haggard ever wrote. The main difference is that there is no excuse for Haggard.

A GLIMPSE OF A QUEER WORLD.

MARY and I were staying at a cottage on the ridge of moorland half-way between Whitby and Scarborough. It was lovely August weather: the sea air was scented with the heather bloom. We took it into our heads one afternoon to walk down to Robin Hood's Bay, and return by train. Our way led us by golden-gravelly paths down the steep hillside to the sea and along the sands to the quaint old village that clings to the low cliffs in the

northern curve of the bay. Its red-tiled houses, set at all sorts of angles, and the narrow crooked passages that lead to them, speak of its age-long silent history as a haunt of smugglers and sea robbers. These have all changed now into peaceful fisher folk, who give a placid welcome to the flock of well-to-do inlanders who settle among them in the pleasant summer-time.

As we approached the entrance to the village—the steep bit of road by the life-boat station—we found it thronged with a congregation of natives and visitors, who were listening to a preacher. A number of schoolboys were among the crowd, apparently regarding a sermon as an interesting interlude in the day's sports. It was in mid course; we stayed to listen. The preacher and his friend—representing a University mission, we were informed—stood against the life-boat house; the subject of discourse appeared to be 'Conviction of Sin:' the method of it interrogatory, colloquial, personal. 'You think I am exaggerating?—that none of this talk affects you? You schoolboys! do you say, "I don't cheat over lessons, I don't lie nor use bad words. I am not a bad sort of chap!" Ah! what self-flattery! What self-delusion! Have you ever been to look over an ancient house, in which there was one closed room—one never-opened door? You housewives, who hear me, you know how thickly in such a room and over every surface the dust would lie—how filthy and unclean the place would be! Such, friends, believe me, is the state of your hearts in the sight of God!'

A feeling of satiety and the necessity of catching our train made us move onward: the last words that reached us were threats of the woe that would befall hard hearts and deaf ears. The train from Whitby was very late, and, before it came, the station was occupied by part of the congregation we had left. Into the compartment where Mary and I stowed ourselves came the companion of the preacher. Immediately he began to distribute leaflets among some country people and children, but offered none to us two till after the first stopping-place, where most of our companions left us. Then, after a careful selection, he handed

me a card (red, black, and white—signifying, I found, salvation, damnation, and the present chance); and to Mary, who sat opposite to him, he presented another. She thanked him and added that she did not suppose she should like it or agree with it. She was a Unitarian,—if he knew what that name stood for—and opposed to many prevailing ideas.

‘Did I see you just now at the preaching?’ he said.

‘Yes, I was there for a short time.’

‘What did you think of it, may I ask?’

‘I thought it was very unwholesome!’

‘In what way?’

‘It would have been much better for all those boys,’ Mary said, ‘if they had been taught to look at and love the beauty of the beautiful world about them—(the full moon was then rising over the sea in the blue dusk after a lovely sunset)—than to be made to think of their own wretched little hearts.’

‘I am glad I was taught to look at mine,’ he said, and then, in a quiet casual tone, he inquired, ‘Do you believe in prayer?’

Mary pulled herself together to answer this tremendous question, and said, inadequately, that she believed in prayer for spiritual needs—prayer for courage, patience, power of loving,—not in petitions for change in earthly conditions and freedom from small inconveniences.

‘I believe,’ he returned, ‘that before God there is no high and no low, no little and no big. I prayed for fine weather to-day.’

‘It rained,’ Mary said.

‘It did not rain where I was.’

‘It would not have mattered much, would it, if it had; you could have sheltered. It might be serious to some wayfarer on the hills.’

‘But I had not my waterproof with me.’

‘I think that was imprudent: I brought mine.’

‘But I believe I was directed to leave it behind me in Whitby’ (by divine manifestation, evidently).

‘Really!’ broke out Mary, with some heat, ‘do you think it was of such importance? It would not have mattered if you had got wet! it

would not have mattered if you had taken cold, or contracted rheumatic fever!—it would not have mattered enormously if you had died!’

The poor man evidently thought this a hard saying, and murmured something about his family, —but at that moment the train had climbed the long ascent and stopped at Peak Station. We exchanged a friendly ‘good-night,’ and he went on his way, while Mary and I walked up the moorland road in the still moonlight.

EDITH GITTINS.

A MEMORY AND AN IDEAL.

IN one of the smallest villages in England stands one of the smallest chapels in the world;—very homely, very humble and rather old. Over the little latched door, there is a tablet let into the brick wall. On this tablet there is a bit of Latin, followed by these lines;—

This house of prayer is set apart
For all who join in hand and heart
To worship God above,
Where party names shall cease to be,
And all shall join in unity
To sing redeeming love.

Somebody’s pleasant dream in the past of the coming day.

The bit of Latin runs thus;—

Frustra laborat qui omnibus placere studet. (He labours in vain who tries to please everybody).

At the top of the homely tablet, there is the simple name;—‘FREE CHAPEL.’

In this quaint and rustic place, the editor of *THE COMING DAY*, over forty years ago, and quite by chance, preached some of his first sermons. He has come back to the spirit of the free and human little chapel, after all.

THE RATIONALIST'S RELIGIOUS UNCONCERN.

How is it that rationalists in Religion have allowed their rationalism to destroy so much of the sense of the urgency and value of Religion? It may be a natural result of their rationalism but it marks a pitiable loss. Even as regards the mere uses of Religion,—as one thoughtful rationalist has truly said ;—they are not as remote from the practical as some suppose.

Religion is not only a great dream which elevates, and inspires, and transports the soul beyond the bounds of sense. It is that ; but it is more than that. It includes good deeds as well as noble dreams. In the story, after the transfiguration, Christ hurried down from the mountain to the valley on an errand of mercy. Thus in life the lofty vision is but prelude and preparation for lofty actions. Religion asks the figurative, the poetical, the transcendent in speech, to assist it in expressing itself ; but when it relieves the oppressed, and cheers the sorrowing, and pities the outcast, and builds hospitals, it is using symbols still to express its meaning, but they are symbols that it requires no initiation to understand.

‘ Deep love lieth under
These pictures of time.’

It is a matter of history that when Rome became atheistic her art and poetry passed into a decline. That was sad ; but it is also a matter of history that her manhood disappeared at the same time. That was sadder still. Devoid of inspiration, not only beauty forsook the soul, but spirituality went the same way, and man became merely an eating, drinking, pleasure-loving creature, living upon the ground and without the wish to live higher. Religion is a fountain from which flows, not only beauty, but nobler living down into the plains of life. By exalting man in his aspirations and hopes, it draws toward the heights everything belonging to a man. By increasing his hope, it increases his courage. It not only solemnises his music, but it makes his heart more tender. By awakening his awe, it teaches him humility. If at times he is carried off his feet, and is swept upward through space, as if in a chariot of fire like the prophet, and sees the glory yet to be revealed, returning he walks more reverently amid the affairs of earth. Religion has awakened the noblest powers of the soul ; it has given the grandest and sweetest music ; it has softened the heart ; it makes life significant ; and it clothes earth with a splendor not its own.

We often wonder at the little interest many manifest in religious worship—the beautiful, the precious symbol of the soul’s pilgrimage to God. There are those who can spend hours at a theatre ;

but feel an hour and a half once a week enough for this;—and some seem to grudge even that—God help them! It surely must be from lack of insight. How will it look to us in a little while from the other side!

‘THE MOTHER OF GOD.’

WE enjoy plainness and frankness of speech, and we thank the Rev. Vernon Staley for giving it to us. His book, entitled ‘The Catholic Religion: A manual of instruction for members of the Anglican Church,’ is a sign of the times. It is in its ninth edition (one hundred and eighth thousand), and, in all respects, it is a *fac simile* of the well-known Roman Catholic books. Any sensitive and resolute person, taking in this instruction, would quite naturally ‘go over’ to the real thing.

But we do not intend to review the book, we only want to quote a remarkable passage from it:—useful as compelling us to see what the notion of the Virgin birth really means. Here it is;—

It was to the pure maiden of Nazareth, thus chosen and prepared by God, that the angel Gabriel came, bearing the offer from God of an honour so amazing, that compared with it every earthly honour is as nothing. The angel’s message was nothing less than that Almighty God would, with her consent, take human form in her womb.

But even yet the Incarnation was not accomplished; there wanted the consent of Mary to be the agent in its fulfilment.

Let us pause to consider what this announcement involved to Mary. She must have seen, by a pure womanly instinct, that there lay before her a time of keenest trial, of suspicion and agonising doubt. If she accepted her amazing destiny, would not the finger of reproach be pointed at her as the Holy Child grew in her womb? How could she explain her condition even to those nearest and dearest to her? . . . Beyond all this, there was the thought of the strangely mysterious association with Almighty God and His deep purposes, and all it would cost her to maintain such a dignity, which must have tempted the Blessed Virgin to hesitate in accepting the Divine call. ‘What might not she have to be, to do, to endure, to surrender, to look forward to, who in a moment learned in the depth of her obscurity that she had been chosen and was called out of all mankind to be the mother of the “Son of the Highest,” the “Son of God,” the “Christ.”’

It was a tremendous crisis in the history of the world. Would the purpose of the Eternal Word to become incarnate for us men and for our salvation be accepted, or would His merciful design, for a time at least, be thwarted? The immediate decision, in a certain real sense, lay with the Blessed Virgin Mary, as a free moral agent; and we may well thank Almighty God that she made the right decision. In the face of all that awaited her, by the grace of God, the Blessed Virgin, with perfect faith and complete self-surrender, accepted the wondrous call of God, and uttered the eventful words,—‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to Thy word.’ In that central moment, the everlasting Son of the Father, who took upon Him to deliver man, did not abhor the Virgin’s womb. He began to take human form, and Mary became the Mother of God.

We prefer to make no comments. The person who can read this pagan and radically indecent nonsense without pity and disgust is beyond our influence. And yet, it is only a frank and blunt description of the cherished doctrine of conventional Christianity.

AMERICA: ITS PROFESSIONS AND ITS PRACTICES.

[The following was crowded out last month: but it still has life in it.]

WE are glad, very glad, to note that the papers which we usually associate with the intellect and the conscience of America are lamenting the apparently brutal attempt to crush the Filipinos who have been struggling for independence. ‘The Christian Register,’ for instance, says, with manifest indignation, but painful self-restraint:—

The ratification of the treaty with Spain, following closely upon a bloody battle with the Filipinos, may well bring a sober hush over the somewhat complacent and noisy patriotism of the American people. The attack on our forces at Manila could not have been unexpected; for we are not allowed to forget that the Filipinos were in arms and fighting for national independence long before the war-ships of a strange nation appeared in their harbor, and that, despite all suspicions, they were ready and willing, like the Cubans, to hail the Americans as their allies in the struggle to throw off the Spanish yoke. Of course, they are now at our mercy; for we are strong, and they are both weak and childish. Whether the dignity and honor of our republic is to gain or lose by crushing them in their own islands, in order to maintain the title acquired by Spain’s quitclaim, the coming years

must determine. To us it seems both silly and unjust to attempt putting the responsibility for the inevitable collision on those who from the most honorable motives have sought to prevent it.

'The Christian Register,' on another page, aptly quotes Abraham Lincoln's fitting saying: 'No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent.'

'Unity' is less reticent and more bitter, but the following probably better reflects the widespread feeling to which it bears witness:—

The lucid daily press has announced that 'The rebels have been soundly trounced.' They have raised their impudent yellow hands against their lawful sovereign, McKinley I., and they have been trounced. 'Trounced' is a good word to express the gentle correction administered to these impious 'Rebels.' Ignorance of the law excuses no one. *Ignorantia Legis Neminem Excusat.* They did not know they were our property; they do not read our bellicose daily papers; they have not tapped the wires to catch the matchless drivel of Kipling's latest. Though the mouths of many are stopped with the ooze of their rice fields, though their homes are made desolate and their houses destroyed, the saddest part of it all is that they died without a sense of their own ignorant impiety, and without the enlightenment that the Press and the Prophet might have given them. They had no time for repentance, and so Duty and Destiny and planted flags are carrying the gospel of Christian love to the uttermost parts of the earth and the white man's burden is heavy on us. There are tears and sad hearts on this side of the Pacific, too.

'The Banner of Light' says:

Aguinaldo's statement that 'Freedom is sweet to the Filipinos' is most pathetic, and has a very familiar sound. No true American can be indifferent to it, yet how few there are who dare assert that that freedom shall be given the dusky tribes across the sea! Had no one blundered among the American statesmen, the present conflict would have been avoided, and freedom, under the protectorate of the United States, would have been the portion of the Filipinos.

But those who think like that in America are very far from being 'few.'

OUR BOOK-STALLS.

THE railway book-stalls of Great Britain afford as good a glimpse as could be got anywhere of what people, in the main, are like. There are, of course, daily newspapers in plenty, and these, outside of London, are clean and sane enough: there are also

a few creditable magazines, reviews and illustrated papers: but the bulk of the provender provided is a melancholy spectacle,—from the frightfully idiotic and melancholy fooling of ‘Ally Sloper’ to the artistic devilry and indecency of ‘Pick-me-up.’ The volumes offered, too, are nearly as bad. On a very respectable stall, we lately noticed, for instance, twenty paper covered volumes, with the tempting cover pictures well displayed. Of these, about a dozen were simply brutal or nasty. Here is a description of some of them;—A woman on horseback is pursued by an Indian: an arrow is sticking in her back. A dead man is lying on the floor: a woman and a man are standing over him. A man is being arrested: a pistol is at his head. A loose-looking woman is lighting a cigarette. A lot of soldiers are brawling. A number of Japanese are being pursued by a man with a dagger. A group of men at one table are quarrelling over a document: a man under another table is presenting a revolver. A man with a dagger is hurling himself upon another man: a bear is about to seize him. A woman, shot, is falling to the ground: her murderer is putting a pistol to his head. A policeman is arresting a bride in full dress.

Truly, Messrs. Smith & Sons are queer guardians of our morals! But they probably know the public taste, which, at present, seems to be largely in the direction of bullying and blood.

TAUGHT BY THE TURK.

THERE is in Liverpool, a Mohammedan Mosque, well supported by a Moslem Institute and a band of active-minded workers, the leading spirit being, strange to say, an Englishman. This society publishes a little paper called *The Crescent* which is naturally fond of shewing up ‘Christian atrocities.’ Not long ago, it printed a poem which it entitled ‘The Blasphemy of Christian war.’ It is worth preserving, not perhaps for its poetry but for its truth.

Behold ! the conqueror comes, the crowds rejoice
 And their loud plaudits to the 'hero' raise ;
 The churches join the universal voice,
 And from the altars pour the hymn of praise ;
 For, has he not his tens of thousands slain—
 Heaps upon heaps—upon the ghastly plain ?

O Jesus Christ, O ' Prince of Peace ' ! who rose
 Among mankind two thousand years ago,
 Who came to heal the nations of their woes,
 And bring the joy of peace to all below ;
 To give to poor humanity new birth,
 And drive the devil from his reign on earth ;

Didst thou not preach the brotherhood of man—
 Whate'er his creed, his colour, or his clime —
 In vain, alas, in vain ! the nations scan :
 Dark evil reigns, and wickedness and crime.
 Behold their millions muster'd in array,
 Waiting, like dogs held in the slips, to slay ! —

Waiting the issue of some dark design
 Of men, by lust and by ambition led,
 To march, with weapons dread, in ordered line,
 Through slaughter, and red blood in torrents shed,
 Oh ! standing armies, instruments of hell,
 Bulwarks of despots and of tyrants fell !

And yet, O Christ, they call upon thy name,
 As if inspired by thee, in all their wars ;
 And still thy sanction and thine aid they claim,
 As if thou wert a very heathen Mars ;
 As if in thy ' glad tidings ' to mankind
 Not peace but war was what thou hadst design'd.

Especially, O Prince of Peace, behold,
 When forth to foreign lands their legions go,—
 Whose people are not of the ' Christian fold,'—
 With what delight they lay the ' natives ' low ;
 And ' from the field of battle fresh and gory '
 Ascribe to thee the credit and the glory !

The tens of thousands slaughtered, what are they
 Compared with the advantages and gain ?
 ' Twill to thy gospel ' open up the way,'
 And speed on earth thy universal reign.
 And then shall every land beneath the sun
 Know ' Poland's peace ' 'neath Hiram Maxim's gun.

How long, O Christ, must this sad state remain ?
 How long shall ' Christian wars ' thy name blaspheme ?—
 Must thy ' glad tidings to mankind ' be vain ?
 Is ' peace, goodwill to men ' an empty dream ?
 Must wars and violence for ever be
 Man's lot on earth below—his destiny ?

LIGHT ON THE PATH.

A MODERN CHURCH.—The Tunbridge Wells Free Church approaches very near to our ideal. The following is its published 'Basis':—

'This Society exists to promote the brotherhood of man by means of religious worship, sentiment, and thought, and by belief in the solidarity and progress of the race.

The Members believe that the will of God and the moral order of the Universe have been and are being revealed in some measure by all the great teachers of men, pre-eminently by Jesus of Nazareth, and are discoverable in nature and human experience.

They fully recognise the importance to each individual of his belief, but find their bond of union, not in any creed, but in a common spirit and aim.

The Members hold further that true worship demands the application of religious and ethical knowledge for the good of the individual and of society, and they seek so to apply it to all human interests, spiritual, economic, and social.'

The Church has no 'settled minister,' but is ministered to by its own members and a few friends from without,—an excellent arrangement.

SACRIFICES. — What a remarkable passage is that of II. Kings iii. 26-7! 'When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

Jehovah's prophet, Elisha, had told the Hebrews to go and fight the Moabites; and, in Jehovah's name, had issued the usual infernal order; 'And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones. And all this the Hebrews did. Then that happened which is recorded above (verse 26-27). To whom was the awful sacrifice of the King of Moab offered? and how came it to be effectual, in securing the discomfiture of the Hebrews? was Jehovah so much in love with loathsome sacrifices that he accepted this one, and drove away his own people? or was some other God able to checkmate the God of Israel? It is a singularly interesting point.

NOTES BY THE WAY.

'TRULY NATIONAL.'—The author of No. 6 of 'The Churchmen's Union' 'Leaflets for the times' is the Rev. W. Routh, M.A. Its subject is 'How to make the Church truly national?' The fundamental propositions of this leaflet would please the most radical Comprehensionist, but what does

the writer mean by saying, 'Therefore, if the Church is to be national in more than name, there must be a willingness to meet all such as are only prevented from union with her by some minor or trivial point of difference.' But that is not good enough. What about those of us whose points of difference are not minor or trivial? And when the Comprehensionist says 'difference,' what does he mean? What is the standard? The Prayer Book? If so, our points of difference are major and vital. The only true basis is—freedom for all who want to worship and teach.

Another leaflet, by the Rev. T. P. Brocklehurst, M.A., declares that the new Union is 'A Brotherhood':—

'It is a Brotherhood of those who are trying to bring into greater prominence the too-often forgotten fact and cardinal truth of our holy religion, that the Holy Spirit is continually energising, that He is inspiring men now just as ever, and that He is continuously leading them into all truth.

'It is a Brotherhood of those who welcome especially such of the clergy and laity as possess a speculative or philosophic turn of mind, and have a passion for investigation and truth.

'It is a Brotherhood of those who extend the doctrine of evolution to that of doctrinal thought, and who believe that the cure for any errors of criticism is not the stifling of thought, but more criticism, being well assured that the inspired Word of God is permanent.'

This is admirable. May the Union prosper!

THE BRITISH PHILISTINE.—*The Echo* lately quoted from Matthew Arnold the following timely passage;—

'There is nothing like love and admiration for bringing people to a likeness with what they love and admire; but the Englishman seems never to dream of employing these influences upon a race he wants to fuse with himself. He employs simply material interests for his work of fusion; and, beyond these, nothing except scorn and rebuke. Accordingly there is no vital union between him and the races he has annexed; and while France can truly boast of her "magnificent unity," a unity of spirit no less than of name between all the people who compose her, in our country the Englishman proper is in union of spirit with no one except other Englishmen proper like himself. His Welsh and Irish fellow-citizens are hardly more amalgamated with him now than they were when Wales and Ireland were first conquered, and the true unity of even these small islands has yet to be achieved.'

HIGH CHURCH AND LOW.—After all, seen from a distance, it looks only like this;—

Said the grave gray goose to her gosling gay:

'Don't walk so queer and jerky!

Just glide, or people along the way

May mistake you for a turkey!'

Quoth Madam Turkey : ' Don't walk so flat !
 Do move with more animation,
 My son ! They'll think you're a gosling ! That
 Would be such a mortification !'

The unknown rhymester did not mean High Church and Low ; but, when one comes to think of it, what a pretty business all this is!—this 'flat' dogmatism of the one, and this 'jerky' fussing of the other!—what solemn nonsense! what childish trifling !

' O THE BONNIE DOLLS ! '—John M'Neill, speaking at a meeting of the Caithness Presbytery, took the ministers and elders to task for 'the moaning and the groaning' instead of the happy or the hearty singing of the Psalms. He also took them to task for the dull reiteration of dogmas. He said, ' This is another thing I find in the north—we are not putting blood heat into our orthodoxy. I would like to see it more in power as well as in form. Orthodoxy may be, as the Irishman said, "the deadest thing that ever lived." It saves nobody. It is often just an opiate and drug to a man's conscience, and he goes to church and expects to get a certain little round of doctrines. The doctrines should be like the Psalms,—they ought to throb and sob and thrill and shake and shout through us and among us, but they just become like a bit of brass. A man must get the decrees and election and total inability and the work of the spirit, and you have to show these over the pulpit to him and he sees them—oh, the bonnie dolls ! And then the benediction and away he goes ! And he comes back next Sunday and sees the bonnie dolls, and 'doll' is suspiciously near 'idol.' But when you come to put these same doctrines—these dolls—into life and power and force, so that they walk over to a fellow and take him by the throat and shake him—oh, dear, that is not sound ! To me it is the old Moderatism—the old Moderate repugnance and dislike to the kind of thing I am associated with. Revival is the very word and name that makes it pull down its blinds and shut its shutters.'

This is about the best thing we have heard of John M'Neill.

A HOLY OF HOLIES.

SEE, the first hyacinths, under the trees in the wood,—
 Delicate breathings of blue.
 Look ! From the leavings of death come the ghosts of the
 The exquisite, beautiful new. [old,
 Say ; is it matter or spirit that palpitates there ?—
 Magic, or colour, or dream ?
 Ah, go not to prove it ! Profane not that purest of shrines !
 Better the visions that seem
 Than the crushed proof, lying bleeding and faint in the hands,—
 Glamour and glory all gone.
 Bless the dear God of this Holy of Holies of flowers !
 Bend low the head, and pass on !

J.P.H.